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STATISTICAL AND CARTOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS: CARTOGRAPHY

Note verbale dated 24 June 1993 from the Permanent Mission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Secretary-General and has the honour to request the Secretary-General to circulate the enclosed text of the "Memorandum of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the wrongfulness of the reference to the sea situated between Korea and Japan as 'the Sea of Japan'" as an official document under agenda item 12 (b) (Statistical and cartographic questions: cartography) of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council of 1993, to be held in Geneva from 28 June to 30 July 1993.

* E/1993/100.

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Annex

MEMORANDUM
OF
THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF
THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

(On the Wrongfulness of the Reference
to the Sea Situated between Korea and Japan
as "the Sea of Japan")

Pyongyang, June, 1993

It is important to name correctly seas across the world, and such naming should be carried out, to all intents and purposes, on the basis of historical and topographical considerations. This is a universal requirement and practice.

Today, the sea situated between Korea and Japan is referred to differently by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, south Korea and Japan: the Democratic People's Republic of Korea calls the sea "the East Sea of Korea," south Korea calls the sea "the East Sea," while Japan refers to it as "the Sea of Japan."

Japan's continued reference to the sea in question as "the Sea of Japan" is totally unjustifiable, as it is motivated by Japan's reluctance to liquidate its 41-year-long colonial rule over Korea.

Historical and Topographical Considerations

Since the ancient times, Korea had called the sea "the East Sea." According to historical records, in the period well before the Christian era, Koreans crossed the sea eastward to archipelagic Japan where they established small principalities, and since then the sea was called "the East Sea."

Our people had named the sea "the East Sea," the proof of which can be found in the stone monument at the King *Kwanggaeto*'s Tomb erected in 414, in the "*Samguksagi* (the Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms -- *Koguryo, Paekje and Silla*)" of 1145, in the "*Samgukyusa* (Anecdotal History of the Three Kingdoms)" compiled towards the end of the 13th century, in the "*History of Koryo*" of 1452, in the Geographical Manual to the "*Sejongsillok* (the Authentic Chronicle of King *Sejong*'s Period)" compiled in 1432, and in the "*Sinjungdongguk Yojisungram* (New Enlarged Geographical Guide of the Eastern Nation - Korea)" written in 1530.

Since the 17th century, the sea had been referred to by geographers in Europe as "the Sea of Korea," "the East Sea," and "the Oriental Sea" and seldom as "the Sea of Japan."

However, the sea had been called definitely "the Sea of Korea" from the early 18th century through the mid-19th century. This fact is proved by some historical evidences.

The "*Carte des Indes et de la Chine,*" made in 1705 by prominent French geographer Guillaume de Lisle under the patronage of the Royal Academy of Sciences, named the sea "the Sea of Korea," and this name continued to appear on the subsequent maps.

Typical are the "*Carte de l'Asie*" drawn by Robert de Vaugondy in 1751, the "*Carte des Iles du Japon et Pays Voisins*" made by Jacque Nicolas Bellin in 1752, the "*Carte de l'Asie*" made by Jean Janvier in 1760, Britain's " *ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA*" of 1771 and 1778 editions, "*The Map of the Empire of Japan*" printed in Britain in 1794, the "*Carte de l'Asie*" made by J.A. de Zauche in 1800, and the "*Carte de l'Asie*" made by Felix de Lamarche in 1811.

The sea was also clearly named the "Sea of Korea" even in the maps published in Japan at that time, such as the "*Map of Asia*" drawn by Katsuragawa in 1794, the revised edition of the "*World Atlas*" by Takahashi in 1810, the "*New World Atlas*" by Kisaku in 1847, and the "*Map of the Great Empire of Korea*" published in 1908 by the "Japan-Korea Printing Company", whose share was held by Japan.

On the other hand, in naming any sea from the topographical point of view due consideration should be given to the universally established practice, under which most of seas are named after the seaboard continent or peninsula, not after any vicinal island belonging to a country.

It was only before and during the Japanese colonial rule over Korea that "the Sea of Korea" or "the East Sea" was renamed "the Sea of Japan." Considering the fact that the Japanese colonialists had forced the Korean people even to change their Korean surnames and forenames into Japanese, it must have been simply a push-over for them to rename "the Sea of Korea" or "the East Sea" "the Sea of Japan." Half a century has elapsed since the defeat of Japanese militarism and the termination of its colonial rule over Korea.

At the present juncture when Japan's liquidation of its past has come to the fore, renaming the misnamed "Sea of Japan" constitutes part of its liquidation of the past, because the name of "the Sea of Japan" is a leftover of the Japanese colonial rule which had imposed all sorts of misfortunes and sufferings upon the Korean people.

Now, with the wrongfulness of the reference to the sea as "the Sea of Japan" having been brought to light, renaming the sea comes up as an urgent issue, the solution of which brooks no further delay. Any attempt to preserve the leftovers of the old era of colonial rule constitutes an insult to and derision of the Korean people and, at the same time, a violation of the ideal of decolonization advocated by the United Nations. Our people will never tolerate this.

However, the Japanese authorities are reluctant to repent of and liquidate its past and they are dead set against renaming "the Sea of Japan."

Last year, the Sixth United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names heard the calls for renaming "the Sea of Japan." But the Japanese delegate at the Conference did not heed the call but categorically declined to discuss the issue, saying that the name of "the Sea of Japan" has been internationally "recognized" and therefore any renaming would cause "confusion."

The allegation about the international "recognition" of "the Sea of Japan" is utterly preposterous and it is nothing but a sophistry. The name of "the Sea of Japan" has never been recognized at any international conference or by any international convention.

Japan's such attitude only reveals that Japan is not willing in the least to make a clean slate of the crimes it had committed during its past occupation of Korea on which its colonial domination was imposed.

Suggestion of the United Nations Conference and Our Position

The issue of renaming the so-called "Sea of Japan" has been raised at a number of regional conferences, including the Beijing meeting on marine environment of Northwest Pacific region. Particularly, the delegates from the north and the south of Korea to the Sixth United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names in New York last September disclosed the wrongfulness of the reference to the sea as "the Sea of Japan," and strongly underscored the need to rename the sea. In this regard, the Conference suggested that the relevant parties consult over this issue for a negotiated settlement.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea urges the Japanese authorities to immediately change the name of "the Sea of Japan" as part of its liquidation of the past and, at the present stage, respond to the proposed negotiations between the relevant parties for the just solution of this issue, as suggested by the Sixth United Nations Conference.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea expresses its expectation that the United Nations and its member nations will cooperate in facilitating an early start of the negotiations between the relevant parties for the expeditious solution of this issue, which will contribute to the promotion of the security in Asia and of the reconciliation among the countries in this region.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue to exert every effort on its part towards a fair solution of the issue of renaming the sea situated between Korea and Japan, a solution that will meet the interests of the countries in this region.

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